

Skeletal remains finally identified after more than 40 years of mystery

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PASCO COUNTY, Fla. - Mark Duane Woodard went missing in 1975. His family finally received much needed answers Wednesday night.

Over the last 41 years, Diann Wells has never stopped wanting to find her brother alive.

“You always kind of hope it sometimes, sometimes you accept that he’s gone, and you know, but every once in a while, it just sneaks in there,” she said.

Mark Duane Woodard was 19 when he went missing on April 14, 1975. Investigators say the teen left that day for a cross-country trip with a friend to pick up marijuana in Texas.

Diann and her family never saw him again.

“I had worries about when he left whether he’d be ok or not,” said Wells.

Two years after his disappearance, remains were found in a wooded area in Marion County -- long before DNA testing would become the norm. In 2009, staff at the University of North Texas crime lab ran DNA analysis and added their findings to their missing persons data base.

“About seven or eight years ago, they found a skeleton,” said Wells.

She said her parents submitted DNA samples for that discovery.

“They thought maybe it was him, the size was about right,” she said.

Sadly the samples did not match.

In 2015, while reviewing the Woodard case, Pasco investigators decided to send the previously obtained DNA samples to the University of North Texas, presumably just to cross-check their data.

On Friday, just before the holiday weekend, investigators delivered the news to Wells. They’d matched the samples to the remains found in 1977.

“When they told me I was just, like, shocked... Completely shocked,” said Wells.

And while she’s devastated to learn her brother isn’t alive, she’s relieved to finally have some answers. She said she’s planning a memorial and hopes one day someone will pay for what happened.

Source: <http://www.abcactionnews.com/news/local-news/skeletal-remains-finally-identified-after-more-than-40-years-of-mystery>